



**Name of Property:** Olson House  
**City, State:** Cushing, Maine  
**Significant Dates:** 1939-1968  
**NHL Criteria:** 2, Exception 8  
**NHL Theme:** III. Expressing Cultural Values  
2. Visual and Performing Arts  
**Previous Recognition:** 1995 National Register of Historic Places  
**National Historic Context:** XXIV. Painting and Sculpture  
J. World War II to the Present, 1939-

**NHL Significance:**

- Between 1938 and 1968, the renowned twentieth-century artist Andrew Wyeth spent thirty summers at the Olson House documenting and interpreting the lives of Christina and Alvaro Olson and their early nineteenth-century saltwater farm. During this period and at this site, Wyeth developed his mature style of painting, favoring subtle earth tones for his color palette, and watercolor and tempera for his painting medium.
- This property is the setting of Andrew Wyeth's painting, "Christina's World," a 1948 tempera painting that is widely viewed as one of the most iconic images in American art.

- Among art historians Wyeth has long been a controversial figure. Some have seen him as a seminal figure in mid to late twentieth-century America while others have been dismissive of his work characterizing it as “sentimental.”
- While these controversies have split the art world, exhibitions of Wyeth’s work have continuously drawn large crowds, clearly demonstrating Wyeth’s extraordinary popularity among the American public. Reproductions of “Christina’s World” have become commonplace throughout the world.
- Andrew Wyeth himself viewed the property as highly significant, requesting that his remains be buried here in the family cemetery after his death in January 2009.

**Integrity:**

- The Olson House is a tall two-and-a-half story, five bay frame building standing on a point of land near the end of Hathorne Point Road with a view south to Maple Juice Cove and the St. George River. There is a two-story barn to the west of the house that is believed to have been constructed at the same time. The boundary also includes open land to the south of the house which consists of mainly hay fields, and a small family cemetery located midway along the shore frontage with Maple Juice Cove. Both the resources and the setting retain a high level of historic integrity.
- Running between the house and the barn is Hathorne Point Road, a gravel and dirt road providing access to private property at the south end of Hathorne Point. The establishment of this road postdates the time that Andrew Wyeth was painting at the Olson Farm. Although the road cuts across the open view between the field and house, the slope of the land makes it unobtrusive from the same perspective as the famous painting of “Christina’s World.”
- After Christina’s and her brother Alvaro’s deaths respectively in 1967 and 1968, the property was purchased by a collector of Wyeth’s works. Working closely with Wyeth’s wife Betsy, the house was repaired but not altered. Later, a second buyer acquired the house and donated it to the Farnsworth Art Museum.

**Owner of Property:** Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine

**Acreage of Property:** 19.5 acres

**Origins of Nomination:** The Farnsworth Art Museum, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, and with his support, requested consideration of the property as a potential National Historic Landmark.

**Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:**

- Designation will recognize Andrew Wyeth, a popular twentieth-century American artist. Because the fine arts are underrepresented in the NHL Program, designation will help to ensure that the NHL Program reflects the diversity of American art and culture.



**Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** None known.

**Landmarks Committee Comments:** Dr. Allan asked that a picture of “Christina’s World” be included with the nomination.

**Landmarks Committee Recommendation:** Designation. Dr. Murtagh moved, Dr. Carson seconded; unanimous approval.

**Public Comments Favoring Designation (comments received as of 10/08/10):**

Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., State Historic Preservation Officer, Maine Historic Preservation Commission

**Advisory Board Recommendation:**